



COMMON RESPONSES OF MALE AND FEMALE VICTIMS



RESPONSE TO ASSAULT DEPENDS ON SEVERAL FACTORS:

- Nature of assault
- Number of assault episodes
- Relationship between the victim and the perpetrator
- Presence of a support system



ALTHOUGH EACH PERSON'S RESPONSE TO AN ASSAULT WILL BE DIFFERENT, THERE ARE SOME COMMON REACTIONS:

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Rape Trauma Syndrome (RTS)

Knowledge of these common results of an assault can help teach victims that they are not alone, their feelings are very normal, and that there are resources to help them develop a plan for healing.



POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

A characteristic set of symptoms that develop after exposure to an extreme stressor.

(For example, war, natural disaster, sexual assault and other forms of violent crime.)



COMMON SYMPTOMS OF PTSD:

- Persistent re-experiencing of the event (i.e. nightmares, flashbacks, intrusive memories.)
- Persistent avoidance of things associated with the traumatic event
- Reduced ability to be close to other people; isolation
- Persistent symptoms of increased arousal (i.e. sleep difficulties, outbursts of anger, difficulty concentrating, constantly being on guard, extreme startle response.)



RAPE TRAUMA SYNDROME (RTS)

RTS is a form of PTSD specific to victims of sexual assault

There are three general phases of RTS which can disrupt the physical, psychological, social, and sexual aspects of the victim's life.

The three phases are:

- Acute
- Reorganization or Denial
- Reoccurrence



RTS - ACUTE PHASE

May last several days to several weeks after assault.

There are two general types of responses:
Expressed and Controlled.



ACUTE STAGE - EXPRESSED

These victims will readily demonstrate their feelings.

Some common indicators are:

- Readily demonstrates feelings, often anger or rage
- Appears agitated and restless
- May cry profusely
- Fear



ACUTE STAGE - CONTROLLED

- Appear calm and subdued.
- Feel/act numb
- Do not express emotions
- Depression
- Shame/embarrassment



ACUTE STAGE - OTHER COMMON SYMPTOMS

- Revival of other crisis memories/retriggering
- Anxiety
- Guilt/self blame
- Poor concentration
- Isolation: withdraws, stays in bed, won't talk
- Sleeping or eating disorders



RTS - REORGANIZATION OR DENIAL STAGE

May last several weeks, years or even decades. The victim tries to find a renewed sense of equilibrium. Characteristics may include:

- Denial of feelings about assault
- Wanting to forget the assault
- Working to make life return to “normal”
- Trying to regain control over life



RTS - REOCCURENCE STAGE

This phase can occur any time after an assault. Many feelings from the time of the assault re-emerge. Characteristics may include:

- Flashbacks
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Depression
- Nightmares